



Programme on Governance in the Arab Region

An Overview on Achievements in the Area of anti-Corruption

(2006-2009)

INTRODUCTION

The advent of the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) and a relatively more receptive environment for policy dialogue on good governance provided an important opportunity to advance anti-corruption efforts in Arab States.

UNDP's Programme on Governance in the Arab Region (POGAR) benefited from this opportunity to engage major Arab stakeholders in a series of activities organized in the context of its different regional projects and initiatives to raise awareness on the UNCAC and promote discussion on the need to address corruption as governance deficit and transnational phenomenon that undermines development efforts.

In 2006, UNDP-POGAR became the first major actor to engage Arab governments on the sensitive topic of anti-corruption at this large scale and indeed continues to lead these efforts at the regional level, with positive implications on bilateral cooperation as discussed below. UNDP-POGAR's anti-corruption activities started in 2005-2006 and were gradually developed and further expanded in 2007-2009 upon the request of Arab stakeholders with the generous contributions of the United States Government, the French Government and other donors including UNDP's Democratic Governance Thematic Trust Fund (DGTTF).

This note presents an overview on the key results achieved by various anti-corruption activities supported by UNDP-POGAR in cooperation with its various partners, including the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and the League of Arab States.

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ACHIEVEMENTS

1. **The Arab Anti-Corruption & Integrity Network (ACINET) was established and supported:** building on the results of regional policy dialogue activities conducted in 2005-2006, UNDP-POGAR supported a series of regional and national consultations with 19 Arab countries in 2007-2008 to support the establishment of ACINET under the umbrella of a Ministerial-level mandate, which was provided during a regional conference held at the Dead Sea on 21-23 January 2008. On July 30th of the same year, the [Arab Anti-Corruption & Integrity Network](#) became the first inclusive Arab-owned regional anti-corruption platform for knowledge-networking, capacity development and policy dialogue in its field. A unique feature in this Network is the ability of non-governmental actors to engage in direct and objective dialogue with governmental anti-corruption authorities on reforms needs and priorities.

2. **Implementation of UNCAC supported and increased in Arab countries:** UNDP-POGAR supported Arab stakeholders to explore challenges associated with promoting integrity and addressing corruption, with a view to promoting UNCAC implementation and informing related efforts at the country-level. Related recommendations were adopted and applied in at least 8 Arab countries during 2008-2009. These include the ratification of the UNCAC in Bahrain, Lebanon, and Tunisia; supporting concrete implementation steps in a number of Arab countries¹; and the mobilization of Arab governmental support to a more robust Mechanism for the Review of the Implementation of the UNCAC. Furthermore, common UNCAC implementation priorities were identified and endorsed for action by Arab countries in the framework of ACINET. As a result, a number of Arab countries committed in 2009 to work with UNDP and its partners, during the next four years, to respond to specific legal and capacity gaps under UNCAC particularly in the areas: (i) witness and whistleblower protection; (ii) adapting criminal procedures to UNCAC requirements; (iii) establishing and strengthening specialized anti-corruption bodies; (iv) strengthening the role of judiciary in UNCAC implementation including investigation and prosecution of corruption crimes and the promotion of professional integrity within the judicial system; (v) asset declaration systems for public officials; and (vi) integrity in the private sector.

3. **Understanding and usage of the UNCAC Self Assessment Checklist enhanced for 14 Arab governments.** UNDP-POGAR supported the establishment of the Arab Governmental Expert Group (AGEG) on UNCAC Self Assessments and partnered with UNODC to provide training and technical support to governmental experts from 14 Arab countries. At the end of

¹ One important example is whistleblower protection, where Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Yemen began working on reinforcing protection systems following the Rabat “Conclusions” issued at the closing of a regional workshop on the subject. Among the other examples that are most tightly connected to UNDP’s regional work are Jordan (providing knowledge and tools to develop and implement the national anti-corruption strategy); Kuwait and Iraq (supporting knowledge exchange and cooperation between the Government and civil society on UNCAC implementation and Self Assessment); Morocco (advocating the operationalizing the law establishing a specialized anti-corruption commission and subsequently supporting this commission); and Yemen (providing technical support to issue new laws/regulations to support the work of the Supreme National Authority for Combating Corruption and the Ministry of Justice).

2007, only 2 Arab governments (Algeria and Jordan) had responded to the UNCAC Checklist. In mid 2008, 4 additional governments (Mauritania, Egypt, Tunisia and Yemen) responded to the Checklist and reported to CoSP II (Bali, January-February 2008), with Algeria revisiting its responses in light of the AGEG training; towards the end 2009 another 4 governments (Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco and the Palestinian National Authority) were advancing towards completing the Checklist. In each case, AGEG members either led or played a key role in the UNCAC self assessment process at the national level, including raising awareness among senior officials on the Checklist and its significance. Recently, the Programme started supporting the AGEG in adopting a more evidence-based approach to the UNCAC Self-Assessment exercise.²

4. **Integration of the region's anti-corruption stakeholders in global networks and cooperation with international organizations and donors improved:** UNDP-POGAR's activities have enabled a more coherent approach to anti-corruption cooperation by increasing coordination with the League of Arab States (LoAS), UNODC, OECD, the World Bank and the U.S. Government and availing POGAR-supported mechanisms and networks to the benefit of those other actors. Recent examples include cooperation with the U.S. Government and the World Bank in the area of investigating and prosecuting corruption and related financial crimes; and cooperation with the MENA-OECD Investment Programme in the area of business integrity. Furthermore, a steady increase in size and quality of Arab governmental participation in the UNCAC Conference of States parties, with the presence of anti-corruption authorities significantly enhanced.³

5. **Capacity of Arab policymakers and practitioners increased in the area of anti-corruption:** by the end of December 2009, a total number of 780 participants from 20 Arab countries, including policymakers and practitioners from governments, parliaments, judiciaries and non-governmental organizations have benefited from regional anti-corruption activities organized or supported by POGAR since 2006.

² UNDP-POGAR's work in this area has been featured in a recent U4 publication, which is downloadable at <http://www.cmi.no/publications/publication/?3484=maximising-the-potential-of-uncac-implementation>.

³ This is evident in CoSP II (Bali, January-February 2008), as compared to CoSP I (Dead Sea, December, 2006); and in CoSP III (Doha, November 2009) as well as in other events.